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General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

19th plenary meeting
Friday, 23 September 2016, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Bouah-Kamon (Côte d'Ivoire), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Martí Petit (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation*): This year, once again, the United Nations calls upon all the countries on planet Earth to participate in the General Assembly, which is — one could say — a kind of global Parliament. Once again this year, we have the chance to take stock of the advances and setbacks that we have experienced in this large joint enterprise aimed at promoting peace, security and the respect of human rights. Once again this year, we are here to be critical, demanding and self-demanding, and to reflect on the need to renew and improve the system of the United Nations.

However, the fact that I can say "once again this year" represents, in itself, a success. Beyond the good decisions and the not-so-good ones made over the years, the mere fact that almost 200 sovereign States symbolically renew their commitment to the United Nations each year is a reason for hope for those of us who, like the people of Andorra, firmly believe in multilateralism and the need to promote peace, security and justice.

Throughout its more than seven decades of existence, the United Nations has not been a passive stakeholder or a static feature. Quite the contrary, it has managed to extend its mission, make its objectives more ambitious and give them content with tangible results. The United Nations was created to promote peace, security and human rights. However, year after year, it has spread its area of action to become what we see today, that is, a large Assembly of all the countries on planet Earth, which seek to resolve what affects all of us domestically and among all of us.

The past 12 months have been highly constructive with regard to advances in the multilateral area. Just one year ago, in September 2015, we unanimously adopted the Sustainable Development Goals listed in what is known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A few months later, the international community — thanks to the driving force and leadership of the French Republic and our colleague François Hollande — demonstrated its ability to give shape and

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content to the Goals with the drafting and signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Following in the wake of the United Nations, Andorra dedicated this year's programme at its Summer University to the Sustainable Development Goals as specified in the 2030 Agenda. For one week, Andorra la Vella, our capital, was home to the reflections and debates of experts, as well as institutional representatives, such as the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe and two Under-Secretaries-General of the United Nations.

The Andorra Summer University marks the beginning of the academic year in our country, following the summer break. This year, the people of Andorra started the academic year by confirming and demonstrating our commitment to the values of multilateralism and international cooperation. We have done so by adding our own particular accent, placing emphasis on education. We therefore chose the Summer University as the setting for Andorra to show its commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

All the Sustainable Development Goals share the same priority. However, Goal 4, on quality education is doubly important. On the one hand, it is an objective in and of itself that has a direct link to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. But it is also a means to achieve the rest of the Goals. At the time of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the General Assembly warned about the need to detail the Goals in their specific implementation and seek the involvement of all stakeholders — not just public institutions — in that ambitious enterprise. Therefore, global involvement, including on the part of individuals, local institutions and large supranational organizations, requires a key tool, namely, education.

The great edifice of the United Nations principles and values is built upon the idea that what affects all of us needs to be solved by all of us and that global matters require coordinated global actions. It is true that a global world needs global institutions, as well as global regulations and global solutions. But the entire architecture will be as fragile as a house of cards if we do not educate new generations to be global citizens. A global world needs global citizens.

In striving to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Andorra is placing its emphasis on education and extending quality education to everyone, not only as a goal in and of itself but also to promote education towards global citizenship. Such citizenship is aware of the challenges and the opportunities in our world, sensitive to the protection of human rights, and open and prepared for the dynamics of our times.

During the past several years, the Government that I head has made education the centre of Andorra's foreign policy in the multilateral arena. We did so during the Andorran presidency of the Council of Europe for 2012-2013. We did so by joining the Global Education First Initiative, promoted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. We have done so in the contexts of the Ibero-American Community and the International Organization of la Francophonie. We will also do so by making education one of our priorities as members of the Economic and Social Council. We will continue to do so in all multilateral forums dealing with education. However, in keeping with Goal 17 of the 2030 Agenda, we are aware that we need to seek alliances with other countries, joint actions and partnerships between the public and the private sectors.

Allow me to offer a recent example of Andorran action in the multilateral arena. Two weeks ago, the twenty-fifth Conference of Ministers of Education of Ibero-American countries was held in Andorra. The meeting gave rise to a commitment by the Ibero-American Governments to promote the mobility of all our students. An agreement among the Governments, the Ibero-American Secretary-General, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture and the Ibero-American University Board will promote the mobility of university students within the Ibero-American area, which currently has 22 full member States. The aim of the signatories is to offer mobility to 200,000 university students between now and 2020.

As always when talking about education, the goal is twofold. On the one hand, the goal is to promote an exchange of experiences, which contributes to improving the quality of our education systems. On the other hand — and this is probably the most important part — the goal is to make our young people aware of the fact that their reality and their future do not end at the borders of the country in which they were born, but rather that they are citizens of a global society. To some degree, we are following in the wake of the Erasmus programme for the mobility of university students in Europe. What has done more to promote European construction — all the regulations and directives that make up the European Union acquis, or all the young

people who, for decades, have been completing part of their university courses in other European countries and who feel European?

It is not the young people who wish to isolate themselves. And those of us who are here today — most of whom are from a generation that has left its youth behind — must be increasingly more generous and more open-minded, because the future of our young people, the future of our countries and the future of our world depends on it. If we educate our young people as citizens of a global world, we will be laying the foundation for a much more open, cooperative and fair world.

In line with the theme of this session, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", Andorra's commitment to quality education is not limited to diverse actions in multilateral forums, but also has a local dimension. The local dimension begins as a result of the good fortune — and it is necessary to say that because it is good fortune — that we enjoy in having three public systems that are free and available: the Spanish, the French and the Andorran systems. That in itself makes up a pluralist educational community with a marked international component.

In that sense, the people of Andorra have been pioneers in our education system in introducing "education by skills", which is a model that seeks to overcome the old concept of education as a simple accumulation of knowledge to focus on education understood as a set of abilities and skills to apply that knowledge. The reason for that model is that what is important is not so much knowing, but thinking; we do not wish to create encyclopaedias, but rather citizens. Citizens who can develop themselves and grow in a world that is changing at great speed and who, when faced with the expected and the unexpected, are able to react appropriately and who are not afraid of changes, dynamism and opening up.

We in Andorra have been working on education centred on transversal skills for some years now. And now — precisely because of the need to educate global citizens — we wish to go one step further. Andorra, in coordination with the Council of Europe, will introduce training programmes on democratic values and systems, so as to measure the abilities and skills of our young people with regard to such democratic values. Why not think about a global commitment to educating our young children on the principles and values of the United Nations, and more specifically, on the Sustainable Development Goals embodied in the 2030 Agenda? Because in 2030, it will be them, and not us, who will be sitting here in the General Assembly.

The great dialectic of our times is not — as it used to be in the past — between the right and the left, or the policy of blocs, typical of the Cold War, which we have thankfully left behind. The great dialectic of our time is between being open and being closed, between those who wish for an open, transparent, cooperative and dynamic world with strong multilateral institutions and those who wish for a closed, opaque and static world in which each country looks, only and exclusively, after its own interests.

The road to opening up to commitment, negotiation and multilateralism is the path that we have been tracing for decades under the auspices of the United Nations. The path to closing down is a reflection of fear and a recipe for populists and opportunists, who, when faced with an economic crisis of global scope, withdraw into protectionism; when faced with a threat to security of global scope, close their borders; when faced with a challenge such as climate change, adopt the selfish attitude of free riding, or expecting others to make the efforts. The answers of populism are that it is other people's fault and that we should isolate ourselves from the others. However, in a global society, we are the others.

I believe that we are all here at the Assembly to renew our confidence in a multilateral way and to continue practicing the maxim that says that global matters require global answers. The Principality of Andorra today reiterates its belief in the multilateral path. Because it is in forums such as the General Assembly that a country like ours, with a surface area of 468 square kilometres and just over 70,000 inhabitants, can be on an equal footing with the rest of the nations on the planet. And I do not mean just rhetorical equality — we have been participating and getting involved in coordinated, balanced actions that involve the entire international community, and we have been doing so for years.

We have demonstrated that, quite adequately in my opinion, by participating with all our efforts to build a more cooperative, transparent and fair global economy. Over the past five years, Andorra has opened its economy to foreign investment, given economic

rights to all international residents, set up a comparable tax system following international standards, made progressive advances in matters of exchanging fiscal information, which will culminate next year with the automatic exchange of information within the area of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Union, and we have also set up a network of double taxation treaties to internationalize the economic model.

In parallel, along with Monaco and San Marino, we are negotiating an association agreement with the European Union that will enable the full participation of Andorra in the European internal market. We have done so not only because we need to modernize and diversify our economy, but also because we are of the firm conviction that a world with more intense economic and commercial relations is by nature a world that cooperates more and is less selfish. It is also a world that is more inclined towards peace, harmony, negotiated solutions to conflicts and respect for human rights and liberties.

It was in that same spirit of firm confidence in global action that we participated last year in the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which led to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In the coming weeks, our Parliament will be asked to ratify the Paris Agreement. It is with that same mindset, in our view, that we need to deal with the matter of the huge displacements of refugees and migrants, which have become one of the great challenges of our times. It is a challenge that needs to be dealt with through the regulation, both internationally as well as locally, of migratory flows and the right to asylum, through the fair distribution of the impact that taking in a huge contingent of displaced people may represent, and through care and vigilance to ensure the respect of rights and the dignity of displaced people.

In that connection, I am delighted, taking up what I said before regarding the fundamental role of education, that the high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, which took place here on 19 September, also emphasized the need to construct a positive narrative on immigration. Andorra, which has for decades been a land that has welcomed many families from all over, is a good example of that positive narrative, as is the case, I am sure, for many of the countries represented here. However, in order for that narrative to continue to be valid, we also need to teach the value of respect for diversity. We must raise world citizens who do not fear difference or change.

While populism would prefer protectionism and economic isolation, we opt for liberalization and greater integration of our national economies. While populism would prefer to deny the scientific evidence of climate change and turn its back on the problem, we opt instead for commitments and specific measurable actions. While populism would prefer to close borders, build walls and stoke the fear of difference, we opt instead for the dignity of persons, for regulation and for education about diversity.

This is the last session of the General Assembly with Mr. Ban Ki-moon as Secretary-General. Many speakers have highlighted his career and his wise decisions over the last decade. Mr. Ban Ki-moon is the Secretary-General who brought about the effective implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and was the driving force behind the post-2015 development agenda. He has been a key player in the relaunching of the multilateral strategy in the fight against climate change, which culminated in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. As a legacy of his 10-year mandate, he leaves us with a clearly marked path in the form of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Mr. Ban Ki-moon is therefore a fundamental player in any understanding or explanation of the United Nations, and by extension, of the entire international community during the first third of the twenty-first century.

For the people of Andorra, Mr. Ban Ki-moon is also the first Secretary-General to make an official visit to our country, as he did in April 2013. The Andorran people have heeded his teachings well. If education is the guiding thread to a good part of Andorra's multilateral action, that is also thanks to the insistence of the Secretary-General on making quality universal education one of the main pillars of his action during his 10 years at the helm of the United Nations. As Mr. Ban Ki-moon said during his visit to Andorra three and a half years ago, the United Nations will always be able to count on our country in the collective endeavour to build a more peaceful, secure and, above all, more equitable world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of

Government of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Salwai (Vanuatu) (*spoke in French*): Vanuatu would like to join previous speakers in congratulating the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session on his new role and function. We are proud that, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, one of our colleagues from the Pacific region has taken up that post. The President can be assured of my delegation's full support during his mandate and presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I also wish to express our sincere gratitude to the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for guiding the work of the seventieth session.

I would also convey my heartfelt gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his exceptional steering of the United Nations for the last decade. Throughout those years he has shown the leadership of a true world citizen. His accomplishments are many and are reflected in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Those key successes will undoubtedly chart the future of humankind in the years to come. I wish Mr. Ban Ki-moon all the best in his future endeavours.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) continue to be one of our most essentials tools for preventive diplomacy, as they fulfil our promise to humankind to respect the noble aspirations enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Today, the world continues to face complex challenges. The role of the United Nations in that context, as expressed in the Charter of the United Nations, is more essential than ever. The global economy continually faces macroeconomic challenges plagued by uncertainty resulting from the ramifications of the global financial crisis and the weak prices for raw materials in recent years.

The precarious global economic outlook bodes poorly for future investments and global economic growth in the short and medium term. Global terrorism and instability in certain regions have given rise to some of the worst humanitarian crises that the world has ever known. Never before in the history of the United Nations have we seen such massive displacements of people. Forced migration has become a global crisis and reminds us of our shared responsibility to promote tolerance, good governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Climate change is real. Its effects are being felt throughout the world. I congratulate the United States, China and the many other countries that have shown the world the path to take in ratifying the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. I have submitted our ratification of the Paris Agreement to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and I am proud that small island developing States like Vanuatu are in the vanguard of the efforts to combat climate change. I would encourage the States that have not yet ratified the Paris Agreement to do so as soon as possible.

The ratification of the Paris Agreement will come to naught unless we take bold action to limit the long-term rise in average global temperature to 1.5°C. That is a crucial test for our leaders in the near future, and we will fight for the true implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We urge all leaders of the world to join the small island developing States in increasing our mitigation efforts. We call for the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The destiny of the world and the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals depend upon our collective efforts.

My delegation believes in the lofty mandate of this international Organization, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. However, just like any organization, it must be adapted in correspondence

with its objectives through significant reforms. As a key organ of the United Nations, the Security Council must strengthen its coherence in relation to the other bodies of the Organization.

Regarding the reform of the Security Council, Vanuatu is in favour of improving transparency, accountability, relevance, inclusivity and effectiveness in order to manage the global contemporary threats and challenges that jeopardize peace and security. Such reforms must allow the Security Council to adapt to changes in the panorama of international security.

Vanuatu also continues to support the work of revitalizing the General Assembly. Those reforms must be systematic and respect the integrity of the United Nations. Therefore, leadership on the part of the most powerful States becomes necessary in undertaking reform in the face of the global challenges, which demand collective action. I would request that the Security Council and the General Assembly choose a person of impeccable ethics and integrity to be the next Secretary-General, who will continue to be a beacon of hope for all those without a voice.

In order to attain the SDGs, the major mandates of the United Nations and the United Nations system must be coordinated to work actively with regional bodies such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, the Pacific Community and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. At the recent meeting of the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in the Federated States of Micronesia in September, it was agreed that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and efforts to make the Pacific more resilient to climate change and natural disasters remain essential components of our journey towards a sustainable future for our region.

Our oceans, our fisheries, gender equality, human rights, health care and education are all important priorities for our region. Given the coherence of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the global frameworks of the United Nations, an innovative partnership with regional organizations in the Pacific is important in order to transform the agreed intentions into significant actions for our people.

Vanuatu condemns all forms of nuclear proliferation and remains committed to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We reaffirm our position in favour of a nuclear-free Pacific.

Vanuatu confirms its commitment to fulfilling the SDGs. We have made significant progress in integrating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into our national plan for sustainable development. The protection of oceans specifically remains one of our foremost priorities within the framework of the SDGs. It is one of Vanuatu's aspirations to see ocean protection implemented immediately, and we welcome the fact that many States, both small and large, have taken measures to revive our oceans.

I am pleased to declare that Vanuatu adopted its very first national ocean policy, which will help us to implement the objectives laid out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our current efforts, demonstrated by the political priorities of my Government, are in line with the SDGs and include a list of initiatives likely to accelerate the socioeconomic development of Vanuatu.

The mobilization of national resources to finance sustainable development remains one of the key priorities of our Government. We have recently created a committee to review our sources of revenue and expand our fiscal base. That represents a major reform, one of the most important since our independence in 1980. Such resources must supplement the financial assistance provided by our development partners and offer us new sources of financing in order to strengthen our institutions while developing our own human resources and infrastructures. All of those initiatives should improve our long-term economic productivity and help us to build a resilient economy. Such efforts should also help remove Vanuatu from the list of least developed countries in 2020, as well as from the grey list.

In spite of the ambitions and noble vision of my Government, my country is still facing insurmountable challenges that stretch beyond our means and that we cannot address on a national scale. That is also the case for many other vulnerable and fragile States. It is therefore essential that the international community provide assistance with reasonable criteria for extremely vulnerable countries facing external shocks. In the *Global Climate Risk Index 2014*, four of the Pacific island States are among the top 10 countries exposed to natural disasters in the world. Vanuatu remains at the

head of that list, despite our status as the most beautiful and happiest country in the world.

The magnitude of the devastating Category 5 severe tropical cyclone Pam had a major impact on our economy. Vanuatu faces one of the highest rates of sea-level rise that we have seen in the Pacific. Its impact has provoked a number of problems from epidemics to the multiplication of destructive insects, undermining food security and affecting the variability of precipitation. That situation has caused various problems for public health.

The presence of such extreme climate events has caused major harm to our infrastructure and economy. Climate change in Vanuatu is responsible for the loss of land to the sea and has also had a devastating effect on the food we eat, on our subsistence economy and, above all else, on the health of our people. Despite the fact that the Pacific is known for floods owing to the rise in sea levels, the disappearance of entire islands means that the people of Vanuatu will be forced to move inland. However, we will be transforming our ways of life to adapt to the climate change that is already affecting the population.

Although we profoundly appreciate the assistance provided by the international community in coordinating financial aid to help rebuild in the aftermath of natural disasters, the actions of non-governmental organizations, particularly international humanitarian organizations, have often proved ineffective. The non-governmental organizations do not always respect the priorities of the country with regard to rebuilding and recovery. That is a major challenge that all too often results in their attention being redirected to other needs that are not the immediate ones of the affected population. The Government could have more responsibility if the assistance funds were processed through the governmental system.

The inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as people with special needs and girls and women, is an important priority for my Government. Our policy is rooted in inclusive economic growth. The scourge of sexual and domestic violence against women and girls is still a major challenge, and if no action is taken, the outlook for global development is uncertain. My country will certainly take the necessary steps to confront that challenge.

Although our historical past has seen little change, my Government is in slow but steady consultations on constitutional reform in order to ensure that, in future, women play a more active role in making decisions and influencing policies within our Parliament. That major reform will have its day.

My country will continue its cooperation with the United Nations in the area of global peace and security. We cannot guarantee development and the right to a life of dignity for our people in a world torn by wars and ravaged by conflicts. We all must contribute to efforts to maintain peace and global security in the world we live in. Vanuatu is proud of having members serve in peacekeeping forces under the United Nations banner in Haiti and in Côte d'Ivoire. We are ready to send more troops in the future if we are called to do so.

Decolonization remains a key issue that requires our collective efforts if we are to make the self-determination of peoples a reality, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We must express our solidarity and our commitment to eradicate colonialism in all its forms. In that regard, I am pleased to note that the United Nations is aiding New Caledonia with its electoral lists. I hope that the controversies related to the electoral lists will be resolved amicably among the concerned parties and that the next referendum will yield fair, transparent and pacifying results. Going forward, it is for the Caledonians to freely choose their future self-determination status.

We, the leaders of the Pacific islands, during the recent meeting of the Forum in the Federated States of Micronesia, accepted New Caledonia and French Polynesia as full members of the Pacific Islands Forum, in spite of their status as non-independent territories. This constitutes a major step on the path to regional integration and the unification of the Pacific island countries, leaving no one behind in the fight against the impact of climate change and illegal fishing or in the creation of economic opportunities through trade and more open economic relationships.

The issue of human rights must remain at the top of the United Nations agenda. The Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, reminded us in 2012 that human rights are inalienable and constitute a fundamental principle of the United Nations. As Members of the United Nations, it is our duty to demand that those words be translated into concrete actions.

The issue of human rights for the peoples in West Papua remains unresolved. I stand on this rostrum, as did my predecessors with the same moral conviction, to

call on the United Nations to take concrete measures to resolve that question and fellow leaders have supported the plea of the West Papuans. The United Nations should not close its eyes to the abuses of human rights in the province of West Papua. The people of West Papua have turned to the United Nations for a glimmer of hope — a hope for freedom to exercise of their rights in their own territory and to freely assert their identity. I urge the United Nations to include this issue in its Human Rights Up Front initiative.

In conclusion, as we begin an era of sustainable development, the importance of working together becomes more evident and urgent. The implementation of international agreements will not be an easy matter, given the complex global challenges and the hostile environment in which we live. However, everything is possible and we must believe that. We must ensure that the promise of the Charter of the United Nations is respected for those who need it most. Our role is one of bridging the gap between the rhetoric and the action in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is proud whenever a member of our small island developing States assumes the presidency of the General Assembly. As we thank the outgoing President for his noble efforts, we place special trust in the new President to lead our Assembly at this crucial juncture. From our Atlantic archipelago to his Pacific one, we pledge our cooperation and solidarity as he discharges his important mission.

With each passing year, the Assembly has heard more and more voices with greater and greater intensity chronicling the shortcomings, as well as the possibilities, of our modern global order. As that crescendo of collective wisdom has grown evermore powerful, it has become increasingly apparent that the inbuilt inequalities of our global architecture are threatening the very foundations of this 71-year-old international experiment — inequalities of access and opportunity, unequal distribution of global burdens and benefits, a system of double standards untethered from principle, a calcification of the very divisions that globalization was meant to obliterate.

However, even as the voices have grown more powerful, the inequalities they decry have remained stubbornly intractable. The voices from the periphery, no matter how loud or plentiful, appear unable to rouse the core beneficiaries of a flawed system from their affluent apathy. No matter how many global crises have been and are plainly rooted in global inequalities, powerful short-term self-interest has prevailed in the face of collective common sense.

The year 2016 has seen the ripening of the fruit of that short-sighted approach. The pressure for change now comes not only from the marginalized outposts of globalization's casualties, but internally, from within the rich and powerful nations themselves. The globalization's discontents and its discontented have reached critical mass within the citadels of casino capitalism and consumption. That discontent has been transmitted with crystal clarity by way of the ballot boxes from Montana to the British Midlands, where the cool logic of the status quo was trumped by emotional appeals for a return, however undesirable, to past glories imagined or real. The crescendo of voices is

now borderless and cross-cutting. It is impossible to ignore any longer.

The threadbare clichés of globalization's presumed benefits are of cold comfort to marginalized nations and peoples. The latter have fasted too long at the dry spigot of promised trickle-down prosperity. The longed-for rising tide that lifts all boats has come in the form of rising seas that threaten to inundate small island developing States and a tsunami of corporate consolidations that has had a deleterious effect on small States, small businesses, small farmers and the poor. This year, we must address the chasm between our idealistic expectations and our deeply flawed realities. Modern globalization as a concept, as a rules-and-norms-based system and as an international practice is unbalanced and unsustainable. It is a system that is broken, one that is not beyond repair, but in urgent need of reform. Globalization benefits few and is an onerous burden on too many. To use a cricketing metaphor, we must take a fresh guard.

It is that urgent need for a fresh and transformative approach that adds impetus and a sense of immediacy to the President's theme for this year's general debate, which calls for a universal push to transform our world. In order to achieve that transformation, the President has recognized the potential of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in doing so has correctly identified our existing difficulties as being rooted in the inequities that the SDGs seek to address. Our collective quest to achieve those Goals is indistinguishable from the overarching pursuit of a fairer, more just and more equal world. We must accept the President's invitation to rethink and redesign our global compact, not in the narrow interests of modern-day robber barons, but with people-centred programmes and policies in mind.

In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, my Government has comprehensively incorporated the 2030 Agenda into its planning. It has focused on economic development and job creation, quality education, poverty eradication, the strengthening of institutions and infrastructure, renewable energy, climate resilience and the health, well-being and security of citizens. These are all central to our national medium-term development plans.

This year, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines launched a zero-hunger trust fund, inspired by Goals 1 and 2 of the SDGs. The zero-hunger trust fund employs a narrowly targeted and multifaceted set of tools that are designed to ensure that, by 2020, no citizen goes hungry. We hope that the fund will be generously supported by our developmental partners and that it will become a best practice that can be adopted and adapted in other small island contexts.

Goal 7 of the SDGs calls for the development of renewable energy with particular emphasis on small island States. In our quest for affordable and clean energy, our country has heavily invested in developing its geothermal resources. We anticipate that by 2019, 50 per cent of our national energy will be geothermal and 80 per cent of our energy will come from a mixture of renewable resources, including hydroelectric and solar energy. We are indebted to the Clinton Global Initiative, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Caribbean Development Bank, and the International Renewable Energy Agency, to name but a few, for their invaluable support of the initiative.

As major greenhouse-gas emitters continue to dither, more frequent and more intense hurricanes continue to sweep our lands and to wash away large portions of our gross domestic product. We are already experiencing the terrible effects of climate change. The spotlight on mitigation should now also be shone on adaptation, which is a more immediate concern. The trajectory we face is one of rising temperatures and the mitigation pledges made by countries ahead of the Paris Agreement in December 2015 put us on track for a 3-3.5°C increase in global temperatures by the end of the century. I applaud the international community for reaching the much-anticipated Paris Agreement on Climate Change in December last year, as well as the Secretary-General for convening the high-level event on entry into force of Paris Agreement during the current seventy-first session.

However, the promises made in the Paris Agreement to mitigate climate change and to provide climate financial aid are inadequate and unenforceable. Indeed, as President Obama of the United States noted in his final address to this Organization, the Paris Agreement is just a framework; therefore, we need to be more ambitious. The failure to mobilize sufficiently and facilitate access to promised climate financial aid mirrors official development aid scenarios, where the majority of developed countries have failed to meet the 0.7 per cent target of gross national income that was agreed to in the Monterrey Consensus in

2002. Accessing the promised financial aid has been extremely difficult.

For globalization to be legitimately transformed, it must be fully inclusive. That inclusivity must be based on the principles of sovereign equality, non-interference embodied in the letter and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and on an end to the cynical enabling of major Powers' interests at the expense of people's lives and livelihoods. Nowhere is that cynicism and feigned impotence more apparent than in the civil war that has devastated the Syrian Arab Republic over the past five years. The Assembly and the Security Council have too frequently turned a blind eye and stayed silent when faced with the actions of countries that have sought to fund and foment war and instability in Syria. Creative diplomacy, not military victory, is clearly the answer for putting an end to this conflict.

The impotence of learned helplessness and the tyranny of failure to intervene has meant that many nations have been repeatedly and unjustly excluded from the promise of an integrated world. The people of the State of Palestine are victims of that impotence, despite the overwhelming recognition of Palestine and the obvious need for an independent and internationally supported contiguous State, where the population is able to live in peace alongside its Israeli neighbours.

The people-centred and progressive leaders of Latin America and the Caribbean, who dared to dream of alternatives to an iniquitous status quo, are once again being punished for their impertinence — from the continued embargo against the noble Cuban people and the externally stoked unrest in Venezuela, to the parliamentary coup d'état in Brazil. We are entering a new but depressingly familiar chapter in a book that is already soaked with the blood of progressive heroes. However, the schemes of yesteryear, with their dirty tricks and divisions, will fail when faced with the new solidarity that has taken root across our region. Our States, as part of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas as well as the signatories to the Petrocaribe Energy Cooperation Agreement, understand the unshakeable strength that comes from unity and the courage of our collective convictions.

This year marks the inauguration of a new, democratically elected President of the Republic of China on Taiwan. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms our continued solidarity with the aspirations of the Taiwanese Government and people, just as they have stood with us throughout our post-independence development journey. We decry the myopia of a body that pretends 24 million people do not exist and that has forced people to choose between two magnificent exemplars of the noble Chinese civilization. Such behaviour marginalizes a vibrant population and creates space for parasitic opportunists to prostitute principle for personal gain. We must recognize Taiwan's exemplary global leadership and citizenship and its commitment to development worldwide. It is high time that the Republic of China on Taiwan be allowed to participate meaningfully in all of the specialized bodies and programmes of the United Nations system. There is absolutely no compelling argument to the contrary.

I have spoken in the past of the shameful failure on the part of the United Nations to acknowledge its indisputable role in the spread of cholera in Haiti. The catastrophe has now killed over 10,000 Haitians and infected almost 800,000 others. The outbreak shows no sign of abating. Last month, the United Nations belatedly acknowledged its culpability while continuing to use claims of immunity to deny the victims of such a tragedy their fundamental right to be made whole. The cholera epidemic and the failure of the United Nations to address or arrest it has laid bare a shameful ethical bankruptcy and institutional cowardice through legal subterfuge. The report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Mr. Philip Alston, has called the response of the United Nations to the cholera epidemic, "morally unconscionable, legally indefensible and politically self-defeating" (*A/71/367, p. 2*). We agree.

In Haiti's neighbour, the Dominican Republic, the human rights crisis affecting tens of thousands of Dominican-born citizens of Haitian descent remains unresolved. As the Caribbean community and other actors have sought to persuade the Dominican authorities to respect the rights of its citizens against statelessness and State-sponsored ethnic and racial victimization, indifference on the part of the United Nations is wholly unacceptable.

Ms. Young (Belize), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Caribbean communities' determined quest for reparatory justice for victims of the transatlantic slave trade — a native genocide — continues to

gather momentum. Historians, economists and other academics, human rights lawyers and social activists across the world have coalesced into a formidable advocacy and educational force around our cause. Our citizens continue to be enthusiastically engaged in the process of discussion and awareness. We call upon the European nations that created and profited immeasurably from the indefensible trade of human beings to join us in the conversation about the contours of a just and appropriate response to such a monumental tragedy and its consequential legacy of underdevelopment.

The uneven prolonged aftermath of the 2008 global economic and financial crisis highlights the need for reform in all the major global institutions. We are having difficulties across the world with heavy-handed financial regulations that hamper legitimate transactions and the corresponding banking relations.

As I conclude, I stress that the dream of equitable development cannot be deferred any longer. Let us imagine a better world, a fairer world, a peaceful world, a world with a safe and sustainable future — and let us work towards that world, unburdened by the errors of the past or constrained by the shackles of a learned helplessness, but confident, optimistic and clear-sighted about the boundless possibilities of genuine international cooperation. The universal push to transform our world is urgent and necessary. We know and feel that fundamental truth. It is time for focused and meaningful action. Let us get on with it.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu.

Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sopoaga (Tuvalu): On behalf of the Government and people of Tuvalu, I bring greetings to the United Nations. We offer our prayers for those affected by the tragic loss of lives resulting from acts of violence here in our host country, the United States of America, and worldwide.

Let me now add Tuvalu's commendations to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji, who takes the helm at this session. While we appreciate the enormous task placed upon Fiji, we also have full confidence in the ability of Mr. Thomson and Fiji to steer us through the troubled waters of global oceans.

As the smallest Member of the United Nations family, Tuvalu continues to hold dear the noble values and principles of the United Nations. We very much hope that, as a result of the action of the United Nations, peoples of all races and creeds, of all countries big and small, particularly those whose very existence is threatened by human-induced strife, conflicts and especially by the impacts of climate change, will be saved.

Over the past few days, the leadership of the Organization has been put to the test. Will we as leaders be able to provide a vessel, a canoe, buoyant enough to protect and save even the smallest islands of the planet? Will the canoe of the United Nations enable us to rise with the tide of progress and to sail through the surges of environmental insecurity and climate change, or will it sink us?

Tuvalu is immensely encouraged by the actions of world leaders in the past week, by the strong leadership of our Secretary-General and by the goodwill of humankind that continues to prevail. The adoption of the New York Declaration on the Movement of Migrants and Refugees (71/1), the compounding commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the many countries that have ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change have given us hope and renewed trust and confidence in the work of the United Nations

and its ability to fulfil our hopes for the security, progress, and protection of our human rights.

And now we must deliver on our words. Tuvalu applauds the strong leadership of the United States of America, other major greenhouse-gas emitters and the small island developing States (SIDS) — all of them, from the Pacific islands to other regions like the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean — to ratify the Paris Agreement on climate change. But that is not enough. We must ensure that the Paris Agreement enters into force. It must be fully elaborated and operationalized as early as possible in order to achieve real adaptation and mitigation.

Atoll nations such as Tuvalu, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Maldives, Tokelau and all other SIDS — Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Samoa — are already suffering the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise. Many predict their total extinction if nothing is urgently done. That cannot and must not be allowed to happen. It would be shameful for humankind to allow such an eventuality. It would be shameful of us if we who are sitting in this Hall were not to take action to stop that from happening.

Tuvalu therefore appeals to all States to ensure that our collective efforts under the Paris Agreement keep the global temperature increase to below 1.5°C relative to pre-industrial levels, not only to fulfil the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, but to save us all and ensure our future survival. We pray that, through the United Nations, our humble voice will prevail on the conscience and goodwill of humankind to take real and urgent action.

We must also ensure that we take account of the protection of the human rights of those people displaced by the impacts of climate change. We need a legal framework to that end, and Tuvalu has proposed a United Nations resolution facilitating the establishment of just such a framework.

On behalf of Tuvalu, I pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his steadfast stewardship and his commitment to the noble principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the peoples of the world. We have made tremendous strides under his leadership. As he leaves the United Nations, I wish him and his family well in their future plans.

The work of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session is no different than at past sessions, except for its urgency. Tuvalu welcomes the Secretary-General's report (A/71/1) and pledges its support to the theme, entitled "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world". However, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, there is a real need for urgent actions to address the growing multiplicity and complexity of global challenges. It is vitally important that we address gender inequalities and ensure the rights of people with disabilities.

As regards peace and security, we applaud the work of the United Nations on many fronts and encourage further work to find long-lasting solutions to the long drawn-out conflicts in Syria, Ukraine and other troubled spots of the world. The loss of precious lives and misery are totally unacceptable and must be stopped.

We also encourage and welcome the normalization of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States. However, we believe that it is important for the sake of peace and security that those relations be pragmatically translated into other areas of cooperation. We should recognize, of course, Cuba's humanitarian support and contribution — including its support to Tuvaluans in the form of scholarships and training, from which we have tremendously benefited.

The provocative actions displayed by the People's Democratic Republic of Korea against the Republic of Korea and their potential implications for peace and security in the world, including in our own Pacific Ocean region, are totally unacceptable. We deplore those actions and urge that urgent steps be taken to completely suspend them at the earliest opportunity.

We are also concerned about the continuing denial of the right of the 24 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to be readmitted to United Nations membership so that they can participate in the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. We need to recognize that Taiwan is a vibrant democracy, which has recently elected and inaugurated a new President. Taiwan's genuine efforts in supporting various developmental and humanitarian undertakings, including in Tuvalu and many developing countries, need to be recognized as well. As we embark on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Taiwan's direct and indirect support will greatly help in leveraging existing partnerships. Taiwan is already involved in the work of many specialized United Nations bodies, such as the World Health Organization and the International Civil Aviation

Organization. We therefore truly believe that Taiwan deserves international recognition and to become an active member of and participant in all the bodies of the United Nations system.

In the same vein, the principle of self-determination must also be respected and honoured. This great body cannot continue to ignore the ongoing violations of human rights in West Papua and that territory's desire to achieve self-determination. It must take them into account. It must not be blinded by the actions that are being carried out under the guise of the principles of non-interference and sovereignty. The United Nations must act in this matter and find a workable solution to give autonomy to the indigenous peoples of West Papua.

We are pleased that we now have a united front with respect to development, our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is underpinned by the key principles of interdependence, universality and solidarity. No country big or small, rich or poor, can achieve its SDGs alone. We must collaborate in durable and genuine partnerships on all the Sustainable Development Goals for the benefit of all. Our urgent focus, however, must be on the individuals at the margins of our societies, who can easily be left behind. We are indeed their beacon of hope. We must find practical and timely remedies that remedy the basic inequities and insecurities that persist. Our 2030 Agenda must deliver in ensuring the fundamental rights and welfare of all citizens in current as well as future generations.

Our unity is founded on diversity. The United Nations can only be as effective as the sum of all positive national and regional actions put together. We are grateful for the work resulting in the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Samoa Pathway) and believe that, for SIDS like Tuvalu not to be left behind, it is critical that the Samoa Pathway be fully implemented, and that proper provision for SIDS be made in all United Nations agencies and programmes.

Tuvalu has recently launched its own national strategy for sustainable development. It is called Te Kakeega III — meaning "progress" in Tuvalu — and reflects the 2030 Agenda. Te Kakeega III is based on a theme entitled "Protect and save Tuvalu" and on the principles of local ownership, leadership, development and inclusiveness in decision-making, as well as on mutual trust and respect in working with our partners. We acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our development partners: Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the European Union and the Republic of China on Taiwan, together with all other bilateral and multilateral partners. The ultimate focus of Te Kakeega III is to fortify the resilience of Tuvalu and to reduce the vulnerabilities specific to its land territory, territorial waters, biodiversity and, most important of all, its people, through education, training and capacity-building. Tuvalu welcomes durable and genuine partnerships with the international community. All countries should advance together — though at a different pace, but progressively nevertheless. Each country must drive its own pursuits, in tune with its own capabilities and circumstances.

Fundamental gaps exist in the achievement of our Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially in the least developed countries that are also small island developing States, like my own country, Tuvalu. While poverty indices in our countries may have improved, our atoll nations will forever encounter development difficulties, and our level of vulnerabilities and fragility will continue to present us with unique challenges, however well-intentioned and well-planned our actions may be. Accordingly, special windows of opportunity for SIDS and the least developed countries are needed. We must not experience again the shortfalls that befell us under the MDGs. There must be genuine partnerships to deal with our unique and particular challenges.

Irrespective of how well-intentioned or how well written our national strategies for sustainable development may be, our efforts and long-term survival and security will be seriously compromised unless urgent actions on climate change are taken at all levels. In our view, the cause and effects of climate change, including the threats to the survival of people worldwide, especially in SIDS, have been thoroughly explained, first in the plethora of United Nations documentation, and now in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The time for talking is over; it is now time to walk the talk and ensure the full elaboration and implementation of what has been agreed upon. We must ensure that our commitments under the Paris Agreement are all met.

Tuvalu has exerted every effort to contribute its voice — however small, however low — at the global level, and we are proud to have been part of the negotiations on climate change since the Rio Summit, and through thick and thin, and heat and cold, until the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with its successful outcome: the Paris

Agreement on Climate Change. Tuvalu was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Paris Agreement here in April.

In practical terms, we are not giving up. We will never give up. We are committed to reducing our greenhouse-gas emissions, as we stated in our Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, and by 2020 we shall have reached our target of 100 per cent electricity generation from renewable sources. Tuvalu has also established a Tuvalu Climate Change Survival Fund, using its own meagre financial resources, as a mechanism to show that we are serious in saving our people and enabling them to forever remain on the islands. The Survival Fund is now also a catalyst to engage in meaningful partnerships with the world.

However, on our own, we are quite unable to afford the immense cost of adapting to the impacts of climate change. In that respect, we are deeply grateful for the support that has come bilaterally and from the agencies of the Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific, from various United Nations bodies in the Asia and Pacific region, as well as to the work of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and its Board. Tuvalu is currently one of only two SIDS in the Pacific with approved funding for adaptation work on the ground. We thank the United Nations Development Programme for partnering with Tuvalu in the development of our proposal. We also thank the two co-Chairs and Board members of GCF, and in particular our own SIDS representation on the GCF Board, for their favourable consideration. While we appreciate past assistance, we continue to need help in building our national capacity with respect to writing project proposals and reporting on progress. Let me assure both members and partners of GCF of Tuvalu's total commitment to ensuring the success of the approved project, and, of course, our full cooperation in future partnerships with GCF.

We are also very appreciative of the assistance that we received following Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2015. However, we believe that there is a need to establish a more systematic mechanism to respond to disasters in small island development States, particularly those in the Pacific. We have proposed the establishment of a Pacific climate change insurance facility to help us receive assistance in a timely manner during disasters, without having to wait for partnerships and responses from partners.

We welcome the Oceans Conference to be held next year by the United Nations. The Pacific Island countries were instrumental in ensuring that oceans were included in the SDGs. The oceans provide the basis for our life. We therefore stress the need for collective action to properly address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, ocean acidification, the protection of biodiversity beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, and reforms to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, so as to protect the natural resources of our islands.

Instead of singing the same old tune about good governance and political solutions, we need moral probity and soul-searching in dealing with the oceans. More than ever, we need the helping hand of Almighty God to guide us in our work. We must place God at the centre of our human efforts and the endeavours of the United Nations, to ensure that we successfully reach our destination together. Next week, Tuvalu will celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of its independence. I ask Members to partner with Tuvalu and with God as we journey forward.

I wish the Assembly success in reaching its goals the current session. I would like to reiterate that Tuvalu is fully committed to multilateralism. We believe that we cannot survive as a State without our United Nations. If we save Tuvalu, and SIDS, through the SDGs, particularly through Goal 13, on climate change, and Goal 14, on oceans, we will save the world. May God bless the United Nations. May God bless Tuvalu.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Utilities of Tuvalu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Patrice Emery Trovoada, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Patrice Emery Trovoada, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Patrice Emery Trovoada, Prime Minister of the Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Trovoada (Sao Tome and Principe) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at this seventy-first session of the General Assembly, to congratulate, on behalf of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, President Peter Thomson on his election and to wish him every success. We hope that during his presidency our Organization will be able to address and resolve the major issues that affect our respective peoples and our planet as a whole, following on from the adoption in 2015 of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to pay homage to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his sustained efforts throughout his two terms of office to help our Organization grow and reinforce its role and action, focusing on peace, democracy and the protection of life in all its forms and elements.

The annual convening of the General Assembly can in many respects be interpreted by the people that we represent as an act of powerlessness, arising from the fact that the world continues to live in tension, with more than its fair share of indescribable suffering on a daily basis, as a result of past conflicts, new conflicts and poorly managed conflicts. At a time when the treatment of refugees fleeing war or hunger or both collides with populism and extremism, the democracies of rich countries appear to provide false responses to real problems, rendering them even more complex, stigmatizing and isolating our fellow peoples as simplistic slogans and reductive schemes increase divisions between peoples, civilizations and cultures.

We are pleased that the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants was held here at Headquarters a few days ago. But the United Nations, and particularly the Security Council, must do more to bring definitive settlements to the conflicts that are fuelling terrorism, the disappearance of States and the despair of populations. In this sense, we await the urgent adoption of the comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

We believe it to be essential that our Organization establish more binding mechanisms to ensure effective solidarity with the victims of war and terrorism and bring about solutions for old and recent conflicts, particularly the Israel-Palestine conflict and those in Syria and Libya, as well as the emergence of terrorist groups in the Sahel. Because of these conflicts, we are compelled to deploy a prevention policy to ensure that other issues of conflict do not arise. We must ensure on a permanent basis that States respect the integrity of human beings and the right to freedom of expression and to regular, just and transparent elections, and that post-conflict commitments are fulfilled by stakeholders.

We are pleased to witness the return of peace and the conclusion of the electoral process in the Central African Republic. We encourage support for the achievement of better conditions for the free and peaceful elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we reaffirm our commitment to the dialogue and consultations between neighbouring States in order to stabilize South Sudan, Burundi and Somalia. We also welcome the Colombian peace agreement and the rapprochement between Cuba and the United States of America.

Humankind has always made genuine progress when peaceful coexistence and quest for solutions are prioritized, thanks to the opening of hearts and minds to differences, innovation, tolerance and respect for others. We strongly believe in our Organization as the ideal vehicle for bringing harmony to our world through respect for differences, cultures and government models and systems, as well as by constructing intelligent solutions based on cooperation and exchanges that generate wealth, prosperity and sustainable peace for everyone.

The role accorded to sustainable development at the two most recent sessions of the General Assmebly demonstrates the undeniable spirit of inclusion that drives us. However, it is clear that this belief in inclusion and the quest for sustainable development, peace and security cannot become a reality unless we reform our Organization. We must make it more credible, more effective, more efficient and more representative, in particular by ending a situation in which Africa is the sole continent without a permanent seat on the Security Council.

My country, Sao Tome and Principe, is a young democracy that has been functioning for almost 26 years. In August, it again held democratic elections, in which it elected its fourth President of the Republic. Despite being an island State, the second-smallest State in Africa and a State without mineral resources,

we have nevertheless made remarkable progress in human development, with a school enrolment rate of over 97 per cent, an electricity coverage rate of over 60 per cent, an Internet penetration rate that is growing exponentially, one of the lowest rates of malaria in Africa and recognized advances in matters of governance and business climate. We are without a doubt on track to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Although the challenges of democracy and political stability are assured by the solidity of our institutions, the vibrance of our civil society and the good sense of our political establishment, Government and opposition alike, this does not necessarily translate to economic gain, particularly when it comes to long-term financing, which we need for the building of infrastructure in order to attract the private investment that will generate employment for young people and wealth and tax revenue for the State. This leads us to conclude that, when 60 per cent of the population is under the age of 20, there can be no lasting democratic gains unless there is economic growth on a sustained basis — a situation that cannot be ignored owing to its highly destabilizing nature in the event of failed development policies.

My Government has been doing its part by engaging in action, undertaking reforms and achieving results. Nevertheless, we invite developed countries to ensure that their commitments to sustainable development funding are fulfilled through, inter alia, the diverse mechanisms announced following the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and during the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris. We also call upon multilateral financial institutions to increase their concessional lending.

A universal push to transform our world depends principally on the mobilization of financial resources. The necessary financial windfall, capable of electrifying our continent, irrigating its fields, combating its endemic diseases, eliminating its hunger and promoting professional training, does exist. We see it every day in the capital markets and in the economic and financial press. Let us therefore act now. Access to development loans is the only response, and it will also help to relaunch the global economy with the necessary conditions for risk mitigation, good governance and the fight against illicit financial flows.

Africa, my continent, is lagging behind in practically all the human development indexes. This same Africa paid a heavy price for its contribution to the development of other nations for centuries. But let us not dwell on the past; let us instead exercise common sense and be expedient. Africa is still a continent of opportunity for all, with its mineral resources, arable lands, forest, rivers and, above all, its youth.

This year we will be called upon to elect a new Secretary-General, and this election must take place in ideal objective conditions in order to galvanize all the support needed to carry out this difficult but noble and vital mission of delivering peace and development to humankind.

Sao Tome and Principe reiterates its commitment to the international community and to working towards building a world that is better for everyone. May our hard work bear fruit.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Patrice Emery Trovoada, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Delcy Eloina Rodriguez Gómez, Political Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Political Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Delcy Eloina Rodriguez Gómez, Political Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Delcy Eloina Rodriguez Gómez, Political Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Rodriguez Gómez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Mr. Nicolas Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of

Venezuela, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to lead the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. We would like to express our firm resolve to contribute to the success of his leadership and thereby to strengthening the Assembly's authority as the most representative and democratic organ of the United Nations.

We are in the sacred home of the multilateral system, representing a banner for fundamental principles in the international relations between sovereign and equal States. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela endorses the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which uphold respect for the right of States to self-determination, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity as the fundamental basis for ensuring peaceful coexistence among nations in the context of a multinational system. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council since January 2015, Venezuela has worked to reaffirm the primacy of sovereignty, political independence, self-determination and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

A year ago, here in the General Assembly Hall, our Heads of State and Government adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the ultimate goal of eradicating hunger and poverty, and noting that the Agenda must be people-centred, universal and transformative. However, I would like to focus our attention on the chief obstacle preventing the world from achieving those noble goals. The capitalist model is a huge impediment to our peoples' right to development. It creates profound inequalities and is a threat to the very existence of the planet and the human species. In the past 50 years, the consumption generated by capitalism has succeeded in melting the polar ice caps and creating unsustainable climate conditions on our planet. In the words of Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato si'*, man's actions and his models of production and consumption have turned the planet into a huge garbage heap. That model is sustained and developed through the expansion of violence in its various manifestations, both in internal conflicts and widespread warfare.

In 2015 global military spending reached $1.7 trillion, one third of which — $600 billion, for some countries an almost unimaginably huge figure — was spent by the United States alone to finance its wars and acts of imperial aggression. The United States has about 800 military bases around the world, whose maintenance costs about $100 billion a year. It was not without reason that in 1968 Martin Luther King said that the United States is the largest exporter of violence in the world.

The death totals in conflicts over the past five centuries reveal the intrinsic link between violence and the expansion of capitalism. The sixteenth century saw 1.6 million people die as a result of conflict. The figure for the seventeenth century was 6.1 million; for the eighteenth, 7 million; for the nineteenth, 19.4 million, and for the twentieth, 109.7 million. That tragic story of deadly violence has gone hand in hand with the expansion of capitalism and its financial effects. The ratio of the victims of deadly violence as a percentage of the total population therefore increased over those five centuries from 0.32 to 4.35, making for an increasingly violent world. The forms that wars take today have also changed. Internal conflicts now predominate, and they happen more often in poor countries. To give just one example, a 2005 United Nations report cites a tragic figure illustrating the relationship between violence and capitalism — of the 3 million people killed by conflicts since 1990, 2 million were children.

Capitalism is a serious threat to the future of humankind. Terrorism, that heinous expression of deadly violence, has also changed, becoming more violent and more widespread, attacking countries that are poor or have been ruined, and focusing on geopolitical ends in order to bring about the collapse of States and their institutions and to enable terrorists to expropriate their strategic resources illegally. Venezuela rejects terrorism in all its forms and condemns the double standard whereby the centres of hegemonic power establish an artificial dividing line for terrorism, which is good if it agrees with their desire to overthrow Governments that are not aligned with their interests, and bad when unwanted boomerang effects victimize their own populations.

As we have seen, capitalism is deadly for peace. In the past five centuries of the capitalist model's expansion, lethal violence has claimed ever more victims and significantly worsened inequalities. Its greatest contradiction is demonstrated by the fact that today the world produces enough to sustain every person on the planet; but that wealth ends up in just a few hands, and poverty is now concentrated mainly in the countries of the South and within those of the centre. The gap between rich and poor has therefore grown disproportionately. The case of the United States is compelling; between 1942 and 2010 the gap there

tripled. To give an example, in 1978, the annual earnings of an average member of the working class and a top executive were $48,000 and $393,000, respectively. in 2010, that average worker made $33,000, while a senior executive was paid more than $1.1 million.

According to Oxfam, 1 per cent of the world's inhabitants owns the same amount of wealth as 90 per cent of the rest. But the most significant part is that this figure is not uniform around the world. It is worse in developing countries and in some sectors even worse that that, where the chasm between those who are squandering the world's wealth and those who are dying of hunger is tragic. Concentrated capital has been turned into unproductive and speculative wealth that has a pernicious effect on economic sectors such as communications, energy, banking and investment, among others. It has become a way of increasing wealth without producing anything. It is a model based on violence, where peace has become a distant dream for humankind. To see that, we have only to consider the conflicts that are currently the worst threats to global peace and stability.

The question of Palestine is an ongoing issue for the whole of humankind. The daily lives of the Palestinian people, as they try to resist dreadful violence, are marked by war crimes and massive human rights violations. To give just one example, in 2000 the illegal occupation resulted in enormous setbacks to human development, with a poverty rate that went from 20 to 55 per cent in only three years. That figure has now worsened. We do not have the time needed to detail the numbers and types of violations of human rights that are being committed hourly against the Palestinian people.

Venezuela supports Palestine's right of self-determination as a free, sovereign and independent State, and we therefore believe that the Organization must take the decision as soon as possible to admit it to the United Nations as a full-fledged State. We support the establishment of a State of Palestine within secure, internationally recognized pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We call on Israel to end its protracted occupation of territories belonging to the State of Palestine. The Israeli occupation of those territories and its related policies are the leading cause of violations of Palestinians' human rights and of international humanitarian law. Venezuela also calls for the definitive lifting of the illegal blockade that has been imposed on the Gaza Strip since 2007 and is a flagrant violation of the people's human rights. There will be no peace in the Middle East if Israel continues to deny the Palestinian people their human rights, including their right to self-determination.

With respect to Iraq, the rationale for the second invasion of the country, in 2003, had as its starting point a truth that, not only was not verified at the time but, years later, was acknowledged by the main invaders to be a lie. That military invasion was preceded by an effective propaganda campaign focused on four main areas. None of the arguments was true. The weapons of mass destruction that led to the invasion of Iraq never existed. What is traditionally referred to as intelligence became war propaganda. The large media corporations, acting like veritable monopolies for moulding public opinion, developed genuine campaigns that preceded and justified the imperialist interventions.

With respect to Libya, in 2011, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization carried out a military intervention, plunging the nation into violence, making it a victim of terrorist groups, reducing its human development index and disrupting its cooperation mechanisms with other neighbouring countries of Mother Africa. In the past, Libya maintained oil-production levels close to 1.6 million barrels per day. In August 2016, production hardly reached 260,000 barrels per day. Yet again, the imperialist obstinacy of the Western Powers curtails the right to development of peoples, the right to peace and the right to a homeland. Migration flows of Libyan citizens seeking a better future beyond its borders have also affected poverty levels in developed countries. The serious humanitarian situations in Afghanistan and Yemen also deserve equal mention.

On another note, the Syrian Arab Republic is waging a full-fledged war against the barbarism of the terrorism plaguing the country. The Syrian people are the primary victims of the violence perpetrated by terrorist groups, which are committing war crimes through the use of chemical weapons. Terrorism in Syria has caused one of the largest humanitarian tragedies in recent decades, which has resulted in 6 million internally displaced persons and 4.8 million refugees fleeing widespread violence to save their lives, regardless of the risks they face. The dramatic images of men, women and children trying to cross the Mediterranean reflect the gravity of the armed conflict in this Arab country caused by terrorist groups and violent opposition. Overcoming the humanitarian tragedy of 13.5 million Syrian citizens depends on terrorism being vanquished and a political and peaceful solution to the armed conflict

that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that brother country.

By contrast, Venezuela welcomes the renewal of diplomatic relations between the United States and our sister Republic of Cuba as the only way to overcome and resolve the differences between the States. For decades, the Cuban people have resisted, with dignity and heroism, the ravages of State terrorism from the North whose aim it was to attack its development, political, social and cultural models. The Cuban people continue to be subjected to a criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade. Venezuela demands that the United States put an end to the blockade and offer compensation for the damage caused by such illegal and arrogant actions.

The United Nations system is facing major challenges. Sixteen years ago, at the Millennium Summit, President Hugo Chávez Frías said that the United Nations could not find its way with a map that was drawn in the historic moment following the end of the Second World War in 1945 (see A/55/PV.8). In order to successfully address the complex challenges in the areas of peace, stability and humankind's economic and social development, it is vital for the Organization to be renewed and strengthened, and that will be achieved by reforming its principal bodies. In that regard, we call for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council. In addition to other reforms to be undertaken within the Council itself, the Council should include developing countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia. As the General Assembly is the democratic and universal body par excellence of the Organization, our country reaffirms its position in favour of strengthening the authority of the Assembly in the various areas conferred to it by the Charter of the United Nations, namely, peace and security, economic and social development, human rights and international cooperation.

By contrast, approaches relying on double standards and the political use of human rights to justify interventionism in our countries in order to serve imperialist interests seriously undermine the Organization's institutions, making it a real challenge to safeguard and protect the human rights of peoples and not just individual rights and those of the global elites. It is urgent for the United Nations system to take measures against global Powers that, regardless of the rules and international law, mount attacks on Governments that express the will of their people.

The soon-to-be-elected new Secretary-General will face major challenges and so too will free and sovereign countries whose main responsibility is to work together towards a noble and imperious end. Venezuela thanks Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts to promote international peace and security. It must be acknowledged that the United Nations has made great contributions to humankind. Its intrinsic purposes of peace and security are founded on a strong multilateral system that sets the international rule of law by regulating relations among States. We join in the efforts to preserve the rule of law and advance towards a better system.

Just days ago, in Margarita, we hosted the seventeenth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement. Venezuela chaired that important group of countries, with which we share the same concerns. We made significant progress and we remain committed to peace, development, solidarity and the welfare of our people, within the framework of the Bandung Principles on which our group was founded. In 1946, Albert Einstein asserted, "I firmly believe that the majority of peoples in the world would prefer to live in peace and security". Humankind's desire for peace can be possible only by creating a global Government, to which the peoples of the South, who account for two thirds of the Members of the Organization, are firmly committed.

It should be noted that during the course of today's meeting, a United States plane violated Venezuelan airspace. This same day, United States aircraft attacked the Syrian national army, killing dozens of Syrians and wounding hundreds more. In that same time period, India was the victim of a terrorist attack, and the Palestinian people suffered violent attacks that left some of its citizens dead. As the Assembly can see, the peoples of the South, who possess the largest energy, mining, gas and water reserves on the planet, are the main victims of imperialist violence and aggression.

Over a year ago, the President of the United States, Mr. Barack Hussein Obama, issued an executive order describing Venezuela as a threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. That executive order was rejected by most countries around the world. In addition, extreme and violent groups are supported and encouraged by the United States to sow the seeds of death in Venezuela by overthrowing the constitutional Government of President Nicolás Maduro Moros and employing multifaceted economic aggression and

sophisticated methods to discredit and weaken the country and incite a media, trade and financial boycott. It is nothing that has not already been experienced in the past in our region, when our President Salvador Allende suffered the same attacks from the imperialist United States.

We warn the international community that Venezuela has been chosen as a new imperialist target in order to undermine its sovereignty and bring about its territorial disintegration, with a view to illegitimately and violently seizing the immense, strategic natural resources we possess. Imperialist history, replete with violence, is expected to be repeated — a major campaign of lies and fallacies is under way against Venezuela, its people and its Government. That agenda of aggression makes it an unconventional war aimed at criminalizing and penalizing our development model founded on the basis of twenty-first-century socialism that is profoundly inclusive, distributes wealth to the majority and is based on equality.

Our continent has had very rocky relationships with the United States, which in service of its expansionism and imperial domination, subjugated and invaded many of our countries. Those dark pages of colonialism and subjugation have been overcome by the decision of our peoples to be free and independent. Nevertheless, new war drums are rumbling in the North, which aspires to revisiting and traversing the rocky roads our America has already travelled. We condemn the parliamentary judicial coup d'état in Brazil, and we reject the implementation of a new Operation Condor in our region, controlled from Washington. I would note that Venezuela is criticized for having one of the most equitable wealth distributions in Latin America, with a Gini coefficient of 0.38.

In 2005, UNESCO declared our country free of illiteracy. Today, our school enrolment, according to UNESCO, stands at 77 per cent for children ages 3 to 6, 96 per cent for ages 6 to 12, and 76 per cent for ages 12 to 18. We have 2.6 million students in higher education, placing us among the leading countries in the world in this regard. In 2012, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) singled out Venezuela for its social policies to reduce hunger and poverty by over 50 per cent throughout its national territory. In 2015, the FAO once again praised the Government of President Nicolás Maduro Moros for the exceptional progress made in reducing hunger and poverty.

In our country, our free health-care plan is available to 75 per cent of the population, and will soon reach 100 per cent, thanks to a joint programme with our Cuban brothers. Our social-housing programme has benefitted 1,111,095 families. We have placed particular emphasis on protecting retired persons and the elderly. In 17 years, over 3 million persons in that age group have benefited from this programme.

We offer hope to the vast majority of people who are victims of a ruthless model of humanity. From Venezuela, we seek true peace among all peoples and the establishment of a new economic, cultural and communication model in service of peace, development and equality. We are developing partnerships through innovative mechanisms such as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America and the PetroCaribe Energy Cooperation Agreement, which benefit the peoples of our region.

We also support the efforts of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa towards the establishment of a multipolar, multicentric world. From Venezuela, we wage permanent war on the capitalist system that perpetuates poverty, violence and unhappiness. We echo the words of our liberator, Simón Bolívar, when we say that the most perfect system of Government is one which produces the greatest sum happiness, social security and political stability.

Let us give the world the greatest possible sum happiness, social security and political stability. The time for peace with social justice is upon us. Let us change the system and become true militants for peace.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Kamilov (Uzbekistan): I would like to begin my speech by conveying my deep gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and to all heads of State and Government who have sent their condolences to the Uzbek people on the occasion of the untimely passing of the first President of the independent Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov. Under his leadership, Uzbekistan embarked upon the path of confident independent development and was recognized as a sovereign State and full-fledged Member of the United Nations.

The President of Uzbekistan spoke from this high rostrum many times. In this very Hall, he announced a

number of important international political initiatives aimed at establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, promoting peace in Afghanistan, overcoming the consequences of the Aral Sea ecological disaster and bolstering the effectiveness of international cooperation in the struggle against international terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking. All of those proposals, put forward by the leader of Uzbekistan, were fully supported by the international community and, today, are making a tangible practical contribution to ensuring common peace, stability and sustainable development.

In the 25 years under Karimov's leadership, Uzbekistan became a modern and dynamically developing State. As Acting President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoev underscored at a recent session of our Parliament, in the years following its independence Uzbekistan's economy grew by a factor of six. The real income per capita rose by a factor of nine. Over the last 11 years, gross domestic product growth rates have remained above 8 per cent. According to estimates, this year's growth rates will continue the same trend. As the Secretary-General acknowledged in his congratulatory message on the occasion of Uzbekistan's twenty-fifth jubilee anniversary of independence, our country has made steady progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

I would now like to briefly touch upon some important issues.

First of all, Uzbekistan will maintain its consistent foreign policy aimed at the protection and advancement of the country's fundamental interests. Its foreign policy is grounded in a firm commitment to the fundamental principles of international law as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as in all international legal instruments to which Uzbekistan is a signatory. As Acting President Mirziyoev has stated, Uzbekistan will continue to promote friendships and constructive cooperation with all foreign countries, on the basis of the principles of mutual respect, equality and interests.

Uzbekistan is a firm believer in not interfering in the internal affairs of other States and addressing emerging tensions and conflict only through peaceful and political means. Our country has made the principled and unambiguous choice not to join any military-political blocs or alliances, not to allow the stationing of foreign military bases on its territory and not to send our servicemen beyond the country's borders.

Secondly, Afghanistan was and continues to be one of the main threats to international security and stability. Regrettably, we see little hope for the resolution of that country's accumulated contradictions any time soon. The settlement of the Afghan conflict will be possible only if it is based on an intra-Afghan national accord and attained through peaceful political negotiations among the major hostile groups, under the auspices of the United Nations, and, very importantly, without any preliminary conditions. This is important so that the donor countries and international institutions can commit to allocating assistance to Afghanistan aimed at real socioeconomic improvement and the raising of living standards of the population. Above all, assistance must be channelled to education and learning.

Peace in Afghanistan will bring tangible benefits to all countries of the Eurasian continent. Sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan will stimulate the construction of motorways and railroads, the development of regional and transregional commerce and the establishment of numerous pipelines going in all directions. In that regard, the international community should start seeing Afghanistan, not as a source of regional problems, threats and challenges, but rather as a unique strategic opportunity that ends the status quo once and for all and establishes the basis for multilateral relations that will allow us to attain our goals of prosperity and well-being for all.

Thirdly, the protection and preservation of the environment has a central place in the Sustainable Development Goals for the period between 2016 and 2030, as adopted by the General Assembly last year. The tragedy of the Aral Sea is a vivid example. The significant ecological, climatic, socioeconomic and humanitarian consequences of the tragedy have been a direct threat to the sustainable development of the region and to the health, gene pool and future of the people residing there. The most important task today is to preserve the natural biological diversity of the Aral Sea region, reduce the environmental impacts of the Aral Sea tragedy, and, most importantly, preserve the many vital activities that allow millions of people in the region to survive.

Fourthly, the Republic of Uzbekistan supports the strengthening of the entire United Nations system. We must reinforce its structures' role in addressing

regional and international security problems and ensuring sustainable development. For some time now, Uzbekistan has supported institutional reform at the United Nations to ensure efficiency in its work and a better functioning in the way its principal bodies — the General Assembly and Security Council — interact. Furthermore, the General Assembly must preserve its central role as a major advisory, policymaking and representative body, while the Security Council must be reformed step by step, including through its expansion.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Guillaume Long, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Long (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I bring greetings from President Rafael Correa and an embrace from the people of Ecuador to all sister nations of our United Nations. The past decade of the citizens' revolution in Ecuador has shown us that to achieve development we must do everything opposite to the prescription that the neoliberal hegemony has given us in the past few years.

In the past decade of our own sovereign drafting of the Ecuadorian social contract, we have managed to restore faith and hope in a country that had been devastated. We have found that this hope can be translated into tangible results for our peoples, through the reduction of poverty and inequality, the redistribution of the fruits of economic growth, job creation, unprecedented access to public services and the guarantee of rights, free education and health care. We have recovered a demoralized country, which, after going through seven presidents in 10 years, a banking crisis created by our elites, who expelled hundreds of thousands of migrants from our country, the loss of sovereignty and the implantation of foreign military bases in our territory, opted to found a vibrant democracy and sovereign republic in the global system.

To do so, we had to break with the paradigms of a neoliberal ideological fundamentalism. Power is not only military and financial; it is above all the dominion of ideas. Power is hegemonic when it has the ability to generate consensus and common understandings and explain our history and our environment. To do this, the hegemonic Powers have appropriated words that we all use and imbued them with meaning in order to impose a political and moral agenda upon the planet. That is why, from the South, from the periphery, we must challenge the meaning of the major concepts that are often bandied about in this General Assembly. We must, for example, challenge the concept of "development". To ensure that we are all following the same prescription they have tried to convince us that development is a technical issue, when it is primarily a political problem.

In Latin America, the most unequal region in the world, there can be no genuine sustainable development, social cohesion and political stability without redistribution. And that redistribution often means conflict with elites, who have historically opposed and continue to oppose relinquishing an iota of their power. It is no coincidence that Latin America — which I insist is the most unequal region of the world — has, for example, an average tax rate of 20 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), when industrialized countries have rates of 30 per cent, 40 per cent or 50 per cent of GDP while the average rate for countries of the European Union is 39 per cent. But any rise in the tax rate to ensure that Latin American States can deliver rights, redistribute wealth or stimulate the economy, is resisted by our elites who mobilize all the resources at their disposal, including through the private media, the most powerful tool to maintain the status quo and destabilize Governments that dare to challenge their interests.

To achieve development, we have to break with the primary exporter model of capital accumulation. We must diversify our economies, change our production model and move away from an excessive dependence on raw materials. This idle profiteering, which is often based on cheap labour and unstable work and the bounties of nature rather than the innovative capacity of our people, means that our elites also oppose any deep-rooted productive transformations to achieve development.

In fact, the countries that have achieved development — in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in North America and in Europe, and more recently in East Asia — used aggressive protectionist means to build their nascent industries, with an active regulatory and planning role for the State, with a disrespect for intellectual property that would make us blush today. But here is the irony: when those same countries achieved their development — as soon as they achieved a position of dominance with respect to productivity and competitiveness of their new industries — they joined the ahistorical narrative of development that I just mentioned.

Friends of the global South, if we are to diversify our economies and change our models of production, let us do what they did and not what the countries that achieved development are telling us we must do. First and foremost, development is a political issue. One good example of that is the problem of tax evasion and tax havens. It is estimated that in the case of Ecuador an amount equivalent to 30 per cent of our gross domestic product — that is to say, one third of our economy — is being hidden — that is the precise word — in tax havens. Imagine the dynamic economic progress that could be made, how much poverty and inequality could be reduced, if that money had been invested in our country and if taxes had been paid.

We are now dealing with the challenge of rebuilding the zones of our country that suffered a terrible earthquake last April. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean calculates that the cost of reconstruction will be at least $3.3 billion, which means we have to make huge efforts and sacrifices for our country. But then there are the $30 billion hidden in tax havens.

But to put an end to such tax havens and to have critical resources for our development, we have to wage a political battle. It is good that some countries are committed to cooperation in the interest of development but there still is not one drop of assistance in an ocean of injustices, including financial, banking and tax practices that undermine our right to development. And then there are the practices by the same States to offset the phenomenon of capital flight resulting from banking secrecy and the low-to-zero tax rates with new, absolutely negligible cooperation.

Ecuador reiterates its call for the establishment of an intergovernmental body within the United Nations for tax justice — a democratic institutional structure that puts an end to the shameful practice of tax havens in the twenty-first century. Ecuador has taken the revolutionary decision to conduct a referendum in February 2017 to consult with our people whether they would agree with prohibiting all public servants, including those who were popularly elected, from holding capital and assets in tax havens. We are proud to present our ethical pact to the world. We are hoping that it would be an example of one way of fighting against global plutocracy, speculative capitalism and faceless, nameless, amoral, unethical capital that is hidden in order to avoid responsibility.

Another concept that is often manipulated for absolutely political purposes is that of human rights. Absolutely all political action in our Citizens' Revolution has been thought through from the perspective of human rights. Our Constitution is one of the most advanced in the world with respect to guaranteeing human rights, and it is the first Constitution to guarantee the rights of nature. Our Constitution establishes human rights as comprehensive and multidimensional, which means that importance is given to all rights — civil and political rights, of course, but also economic and social rights.

We believe that one cannot speak of guaranteeing human rights, especially in the context of Latin America, without speaking about the reduction of poverty and inequality. It is for that reason that we are one of the countries that has done the most to reduce poverty throughout the world, with a historic reduction by half of extreme poverty from 17 per cent in 2007 to 8.5 per cent in 2015. Poverty was reduced by one third from 36.7 per cent in 2007 to 23.3 per cent in 2015. Similarly, it is a point of pride that Ecuador is one the countries that have done the most to reduce inequality, which has been a huge scourge in Latin America. To be exact, our Gini coefficient fell by six points between 2007 and 2013. That also shows how we respect human rights.

Ecuador continues to push for peace. We do not have weapons of mass destruction. We are not at war with any country and we are not bombing anyone. Let us see to the immediate entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

It is also important that we leave behind the vision that sees the State as the sole violator of human rights. Of course, States can violate human rights, but other actors can do so, too, especially transnational corporations. Ecuador has experience with such violations. The oil company Chevron Texaco contaminated our rivers and forests in our region of Amazonia, causing disease and death for our people and doing great damage to the Amazon jungle. The Chevron Texaco oil spill was 85 times bigger than the British Petroleum spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 and 18 times bigger than the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska in 1989. The difference is that the spill in Ecuador was not accidental, but rather a bid to make oil at a cheaper cost.

Ecuador is not the only country to have suffered such abuse. Transnational corporations cannot continue to operate without sufficient checks and balances in

order to limit, regulate and supervise their activity with a view to the general interest of most of the people that inhabit the planet. We reiterate our plea for the adoption of a legally binding international instrument on transnational corporations and human rights. We are grateful for the trust in Ecuador expressed by States by appointing us to chair the open-ended intergovernmental working group to draft such a treaty.

At the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which took place in Paris, my country proposed the creation of an international environmental justice court to punish violations of the rights of nature and establish obligations in terms of ecological debt and consumption of environmental goods. We live in a world where there are courts to punish countries when they allegedly endanger or imperil the investments of major transnational corporations but there are no courts to punish those that unscrupulously degrade our environment. That paradox is so decisive and telling of the world in which we live, where supremacy belongs to capital over human beings. We claim the supremacy of human beings over capital.

It is imperative that, after decades of discussion, we accelerate the democratization of the United Nations. In particular, we must strike a new balance between the General Assembly and the Security Council with a view to increasing votes and decreasing vetoes. In that regard, it is urgent that we change the Council's composition, working methods and competencies, and limit its prerogatives. The use of the veto, exclusive privilege of the victors of the Second World War, which account for 70 per cent of the global arms trade, no longer ensures the ultimate objective of maintaining international peace and security. We must set a deadline to conclude negotiations on United Nations reform.

Similarly, we must reverse the diminution of the role multilateralism plays in global governance. We must reflect on how to address the emerging para-institutionality, where a club of exclusive and restricted number of countries have the clout to make the decisions that affect countries around the world. From the Group of 77, which Ecuador will have the honour of presiding over next year, let us demand more democracy and more equality among States. Let us leave behind the global order that preceded the great decolonization of the second half of the twentieth century, and let us do away with the model of first-, second- and third-class countries.

Our liberator, Simón Bolívar, who said that the unity of our peoples is not a mere illusion of men, but an inexorable decree of destiny, would be proud to see us make bold strides in uniting the peoples of the South, and would celebrate Ecuador's active role in the fight to emancipate our peoples. We have made great progress in recent years in consolidating the progress and sovereignty of our nation within the global system, but there is still much left to be done. Regrettably, our America continues to be the victim of antiquated foreign interventionism and domestic reactionary attacks that seek to prevent the democratization of our societies. We still have a long way to go before our elites learn to recognize and respect universal suffrage and the votes of millions of people, in good times and in bad, whether or not it is in their interest. Let us stop playing games with democracy and the sacred mandate of our peoples!

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge our people and the leadership of President Correa, a man who has done so much in the interest of full development, justice and equality. Ten years after the beginning of the Citizens' Revolution, we have replaced despair with hope, and we have shown humankind that political action can build a world where human beings are not merely instruments for accumulating wealth but rather the very purpose of Government.

We in Quito eagerly await one and all for the upcoming United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, to be held from 17 to 20 October 2016, where it will be our honour to host all of our guests in optimistic, hospitable and revolutionary Ecuador.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Elmar Maharram oglu Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and to wish him every success in discharging his important duties. We are also grateful to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for all his hard work in presiding over the Assembly at its seventieth session.

A year ago we gathered here to witness the adoption of a comprehensive and people-centred post-2015 development agenda. There are milestones in history when universal values are translated into political commitments that change the course of events. We hope that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development will be one such milestone. When we reached an agreement on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we drew on the success story of the Millennium Development Goals, which proved to be instrumental in promoting development worldwide.

Azerbaijan has integrated SDG targets into its national development strategy and continues to implement large-scale programmes on improving good governance, fostering sustainable growth, strengthening the rule of law, ensuring respect for human rights, facilitating access to public services and promoting inclusive societies. Despite the global economic crisis and the sharp decline in oil prices, Azerbaijan has managed to maintain its economic growth. Sustainable economic growth has enabled Azerbaijan not only to focus on its national development strategy, but also to actively support international development. Azerbaijan has rendered international humanitarian and development assistance to a number of countries through the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the Azerbaijan International Development Agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In June, Azerbaijan was elected to join the Economic and Social Council for the years 2017 to 2019, after a vote at the General Assembly in which 176 of 184 Member States took part. Since the Economic and Social Council is the central platform for professional deliberations on sustainable development, we will have yet another opportunity to contribute to international development.

To advance SDG 16, Azerbaijan drew up a draft resolution entitled "Prevention of corruption by promoting transparent, accountable and efficient public service delivery through the application of best practices and technological innovations", which was unanimously adopted at the sixth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, held from 2 to 6 November 2015.

Against the background of the various threats and challenges facing the world nowadays, it is critical to consistently promote the value of different cultures, enhancing understanding among diverse communities and fostering mutual respect. Located between the two great continents of Asia and Europe, Azerbaijan is a unique place, where East and West meet, where the world's main religions peacefully coexist and where the values and traditions of different cultures harmoniously complement each other. It is no coincidence that the seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations was held this year in my country.

Unresolved armed conflicts, terrorism, violent extremism, aggressive separatism, intolerance and discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds continue to represent the most serious challenges to development and are some of its most persistent obstacles. The outcome document of the United Nations summit at which the post-2015 development agenda was adopted states that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development, recalling the rights and obligations of States under international law and reaffirming the need to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of States.

Since the last general debate, no substantive progress has been made in the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Armenia continues to occupy Azerbaijani territory, including the Nagorno Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts, in flagrant violation of international law and Security Council resolutions 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993). It is unfortunate that its engagement in the conflict-settlement process is nothing but a travesty.

Azerbaijan does not have access to the economic potential of the occupied territory. The disruption of communications — as a direct consequence of the military occupation of our territory — is a serious obstacle to the full-fledged socioeconomic development of the country as a whole. Further, the region's untapped prospects for economic development are going unfulfilled, particularly in terms of intra- and transregional connectivity.

The humanitarian consequences of the conflict have been equally grim, which makes urgent solutions necessary. As a direct impact of the massive displacement of people from their places of origin, close to 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons continue to be deprived of their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, most notably the right to have access to their homes and property. Further continuation of this situation is intolerable.

Armenia's policy and practices in the occupied territory of Azerbaijan undermine the prospects of achieving a political settlement of the conflict and pose an imminent threat to the peace, security and stability of the region. The Republic of Azerbaijan has made it clear on numerous occasions that the unlawful presence

of Armenia's armed forces in the occupied Azerbaijani territory is a major factor in destabilizing the region. It has the potential of escalating at any time, with unpredictable consequences. It is also the main cause of tensions and incidents in the conflict zone.

Instead of engaging in negotiations in good faith, Armenia demonstrably disrupts any attempt to settle the conflict by peaceful means. In total disregard of Security Council demands and in flagrant violation of international law, Armenia refuses to withdraw its troops from Azerbaijan, prevents hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced Azerbaijanis from returning to their homes and tries to further consolidate the status quo by altering the physical, demographic and cultural character of the occupied territories — a worrying development that was confirmed by a number of fact-finding missions conducted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Furthermore, Armenia frequently resorts to armed provocations in an attempt to divert attention from the core, substantive issues of the peace process, trying, instead, to put focus on the technical aspects of the ceasefire.

Recently, in early April 2016, Armenia conducted large-scale attacks against the civilian population of Azerbaijan. It subjected densely populated areas of Azerbaijan, including schools, hospitals and places of worship, to intensive fire from heavy artillery and large-calibre weapons. As a result of these reckless attacks, large numbers of Azerbaijani civilians, including children, women and the elderly, were killed or seriously wounded. Had effective civil defence measures not been used in a timely manner, the number of casualties would have been significantly higher. Armenia also systematically mutilated the bodies of fallen Azerbaijani soldiers. During those attacks, 34 towns and villages in Azerbaijan suffered severe destruction. Substantial damage was inflicted upon private and public property, including critical civilian infrastructure. In particular, hundreds of civilian buildings, among them residences, schools, kindergartens, cultural centres and other civilian facilities, were ruined.

Armenia's direct and deliberate attacks against the Azerbaijani civilian population, as well as inhuman acts against Azerbaijani military servicemen during its offensive action in April, constitute yet another serious violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. By its deliberate offensive actions, Armenia has undermined the ceasefire regime established in 1994 and endangered the prospects for the political settlement of the conflict.

Having received an effective response from Azerbaijan, Armenia was forced to request a ceasefire, which was agreed pursuant to the mediation efforts of the Russian Federation on 5 April, in Moscow, at the meeting of the chiefs of defence of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Despite that agreement, Armenia continued to violate the ceasefire. After amassing forces in seized Azerbaijani territory and building heavily reinforced military fortifications, on 19 September, Armenia began intensive military activity in the occupied Aghdam district. Meanwhile, Armenia has continued to challenge and attempt to undermine the efforts of the international community, including those of the co-Chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group, namely, the United States, Russia and France, which have been aimed at achieving a breakthrough in the peace talks and withdrawing Armenia's troops from the sovereign lands of Azerbaijan.

Armenia must realize that exploiting the status quo and armed provocations is a grave miscalculation. Its hypocritical attempts to mislead the international community on the root causes of the conflict by representing themselves as the suffering party is doomed to fail. Azerbaijan expects Armenia to halt its military build-up in the occupied territory and engage in negotiations with Azerbaijan in good faith, so as to find a long-overdue political solution to the conflict. The conflict can be resolved only on the basis of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, as reflected, incidentally, in the resolutions of the Security Council. The sooner Armenia reconciles itself to this reality and withdraws its armed forces from the occupied territory of Azerbaijan, the earlier the conflict will be resolved. Armenia and its population will then benefit from the prospects of cooperation and economic development. My country will spare no effort to achieve the settlement of the conflict and ensuring peace, justice and development in the region.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Raymond Tshibanda N'tungamulongo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Tshibanda N'tungamulongo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I take the

floor on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whom I am honoured to represent. It is a true pleasure to join previous speakers in congratulating the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and to wish him and his Bureau full success in the execution of their mandate. I also address this well-deserved tribute to his predecessor, in the light of his tireless efforts that have so greatly served our Organization.

Motivated by the desire to achieve peace, security and development in every one of our States and throughout the world, in September of last year together we adopted a new global development agenda, which we intend to inspire us for the next 15 years. It was meant to overcome the challenges of underdevelopment and poverty and create a more just world with greater solidarity and stability, where equal opportunity would no longer be only a dream.

The theme for this general debate, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", is an inarguable opportunity. It allows for a first overall assessment of the focus of the new agenda so that, if necessary, we can adjust the path forward in order to guarantee the full achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Taking into consideration lessons learned from the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the Democratic Republic of the Congo chose to integrate the SDGs into our national strategic development plan. It is based on a long-term view and a strategic framework to ensure that our policies and actions align with the issues of climate change as well as the priorities of the African Union's Agenda 2063, which has committed us to a process aimed at raising the Democratic Republic of the Congo into the middle-income-country category by 2021, the emerging-country category by 2030 and the developed-country category by 2050.

The implementation of this plan will take the form of five-year plans, the first of which covers the period from 2017 to 2021. In this first five-year plan, priority will again be given to the improvement of human capital, by taking on the problem of the demographic dividends that require strict collaboration among various stakeholders in development at both the national and international levels, with a view to ensuring strong, sustained and, above all, inclusive, economic growth. Particular attention is therefore paid to the specific needs of youths and women in terms of education, job training, improvement of their scientific and technological knowledge, health and employment. Actions stemming from this option are designed to jointly implement a programme for building the transportation infrastructure needed to bring agricultural and mining products to market and stimulate the mobility of persons and goods.

Beyond that, there are many challenges, including that of strengthening the national statistical system and the population and housing census, with a view to having reliable updated data for designing, monitoring and evaluating development programmes. In the case of my country, these efforts are naturally linked to the mobilization of funds, in particular by easing the conditions for donors and diversifying financial resources.

With regard to the political situation, my country has entered into a crucial phase of administrative decentralization in order to enable local management. Each of the 26 new provinces of my country currently have authorities that the population has freely chosen, following the elections for provincial governors and deputy governors of the province, which took place in March and April. This new democratic experience will continue when future elections are organized for local authorities in both urban and rural areas, to take place concurrently with the presidential, legislative, national and provincial elections. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has made an irreversible choice in ensuring that access to State power is possible only through the elections.

I would also like to most solemnly reaffirm that, despite delays in registration and preparations, the general elections initially slated for the end of this year will be organized by the Independent National Electoral Commission, which has, under the Constitution, exclusive jurisdiction over them. The elections will take place as planned, that is, as soon as technical conditions permit. Many other challenges need to be overcome in order to allow the organization of free, transparent, credible and peaceful elections. In order to come together and meet these challenges in a consensual manner, the presidential majority, the political opposition and civil society came together over a two-week period in order to engage in an inclusive national political dialogue facilitated by the African Union with the assistance of an international support group.

The right to elect and be elected is a fundamental right both for Congolese citizens who live in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for those who live abroad. The major challenge today in exercising that right is to ensure that we have inclusive and reliable voting registers. In that regard, I would like to welcome the importance of the voter registration process that began on 31 July, which gives the possibility for people to run for office and to vote. It has included more than 14 million Congolese, those who live in the country or abroad, representing one third of the electoral core, who could not have enjoyed this right without those reforms.

The current political national dialogue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the process of peaceful resolution of disputes among Congolese with a view to organizing the elections and consolidating our democracy should benefit from everyone's support, in particular of political actors who are not yet participating in the process, but who are encouraged to do so. On the other hand, any recourse to the use of violence should be strongly condemned and the perpetrators punished, and any invitation to any insurrection or other unconstitutional mode of access to power should be denounced.

The promotion of human rights has made progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a post-conflict State that has had to face numerous challenges. Two months ago, we hosted a visit from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the context of cooperation with his Office and the Human Rights Council. We are planning to pursue and deepen reforms in this area. That has certainly been the case with respect to the protection of women's rights. Two important laws have been recently enacted — one on gender equality and one on changing the outdated provisions of the family code, in order to align the law with international law in force. With regard to violence against women, we have seen reliable indicators that have shown a net reduction of 50 per cent in cases of sexual violence from 2014 to 2015.

With specific regard to the right to health care, significant progress has been achieved in fighting HIV/AIDS and malaria. However, we need to remain vigilant with regard to certain cross-border diseases that had been eradicated in the past, namely, yellow fever and cholera, of which we have recently seen some signs of resurgence.

The mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) was extended to 31 March 2017, pursuant to resolution 2277 (2016), in order to support the laudable efforts that the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo have been deploying to root out the armed groups that are still resistant to peace. While welcoming the assistance, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo notes that thanks to the security sector reform currently under way, the national defence and security forces have shown greater efficiency and competence in the execution of their mission to protect the national territory and provide security for goods and persons. They are therefore relying on the strategic dialogue with the United Nations to achieve a progressive reduction of MONUSCO personnel and a subsequent transformation of the Mission.

Having informed the Assembly about the situation in my country, I would now like to express the vision of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on several major issues of concern in the world today.

Throughout its existence, the United Nations has made numerous important achievements and attained success in the areas of peace, security, international cooperation, human rights and socioeconomic development. In spite of these results, international peace remains an ongoing quest. In addition, as it operates in a world that is constantly changing and evolving, the United Nations is called upon to exercise its specific mandate to constantly question itself and adapt in order to better confront the new challenges and threats that the world is facing.

That is why reform of our international Organization and its methods and modes of operation is necessary. In that regard, we need to look into broadening the membership of the permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council. The Democratic Republic of the Congo attaches importance to that reform, which, in order to be viable, must take the political and numerical weight of Africa in the General Assembly into account and allow that continent to fully take part in decisions that concern it, especially since two thirds of the situations reviewed in the Security Council concern Africa. To that end, the Ezulwini Consensus remains the only acceptable basis for negotiation. In the same context, it is important to also strengthen the decision-making power of the General Assembly and

the Economic and Social Council to promote peace, social justice, democracy and development.

The international commercial and financial architecture must also undergo profound transformations so that it can adapt to developments and changes on the international scene and so that the United Nations can be a source of hope for all. Moreover, our Organization should promote greater transparency and democracy, particularly in selecting the next Secretary-General, while preserving the rules and practices that have proved to be effective, in particular the regional rotation scheme.

The fight for peace is also a fight against terrorism. That scourge of our century must remain one of the priorities of our Organization. For my country, terrorism is now the most serious threat to international peace and security. The despicable and indiscriminate acts that characterize that phenomenon demand international solidarity and continuous dialogue in order to better organize our response. The peoples living in the eastern part of my country, particularly in the region of Beni, have on more than one occasion become the innocent victims of terrorist violence. That is why we reiterate here our support for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as well as our firm condemnation of the scourge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Our planet is confronting an unprecedented environmental challenge in the form of climate change, which has a direct negative impact on the quality of our lives and which mortgages the very future of humankind. That is why, after having actively participated in the negotiations and the conclusion of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the intervention of its Head of State, signed the Agreement on 22 April here in New York. Now we are finalizing the ratification process, which should be completed before the end of this year.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes another major advancement with regard to international governance, that is, the adoption of the final document of the recent high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, namely, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1, annex). It is high time to put an end to the thousands of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean and address the root causes of those displacements, which are mainly poverty, armed conflicts and the lack of resilience to disasters. We must make sure that we resolve those problems so that all citizens of the world, and in particular those in developing countries, can live happily and peacefully in their own countries. That is the very basic principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, that is, to leave no one behind.

I have focused my comments today on the launch by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals from the beginning of 2016 by determining priority actions, while noting the links between its goals and my country's new strategic development plan. I have also given a general overview of the political, electoral and human rights situation in my country, while mentioning the partnership between my Government and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In so doing, I called for United Nations reform through the enlargement of the Security Council and the strengthening of the mandate of the General Assembly. I stressed that there is a need for international solidarity and ongoing consultations in order to better organize our common response to the fight against terrorism. I also recalled the huge importance of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and welcomed the adoption of the New York Declaration, which provides us with the strategy for managing the large-scale displacements of refugees and migrants, by noting the need to tackle the root causes of those evils.

I will conclude my remarks by once again reiterating our faith in multilateralism and expressing the hope to see everyone uphold and promote its principles and values in the interest of international peace and for the good of humankind. I would like to salute and pay tribute to Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whose mandate as Secretary-General of our Organization is coming to an end. We would like to thank him for his significant contributions to the preservation of the principles and values of our Organization and for his decisive contribution to re-establishing peace and stability in my country.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

The exercise of the right of reply has been requested by several delegations. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to

five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Sornarajah (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom wishes to exercise its right of reply in the light of comments made in the statement of His Excellency Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius, in the debate this morning. The British Government has no doubts about its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, which it administers as the British Indian Ocean Territory. No international tribunal, including the recent arbitral tribunal constituted under Annex 7 to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, has ever called the United Kingdom's sovereignty of the territory into doubt. While the United Kingdom does not recognize the claim of the Republic of Mauritius to the sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago, it has repeatedly undertaken to cede the Archipelago to Mauritius, once it no longer requires those islands for defence purposes. We maintain that commitment, although it is for the United Kingdom alone to determine when that condition is met.

In the meantime, the defence purposes referred to contribute significantly towards global security and are central to efforts to counter regional threats, including those stemming from terrorism and piracy. We do not consider that the International Court of Justice is the appropriate way to resolve this matter. We have therefore asked the Government of Mauritius not to continue with that course of action and to resolve those issues through the bilateral discussions that have been ongoing. We will continue to engage bilaterally with Mauritius.

Mr. Pavlichenko (Ukraine): I am taking the floor in order to exercise the right of reply following the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation earlier today. Because of the late hour, I will confine myself merely to the following fundamental points.

The situation in Ukraine referred to by the Russian delegation was caused by Russian imperial ambitions, particularly by the Russian aggression against my country, which started with the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and subsequently by Russia fuelling the conflict in certain parts of Ukraine, the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Were it not for the constant and sustained flow of weapons, fighters and regular Russian troops into Ukrainian territory, 10,000 of my compatriots would not have been killed and 20,000 injured. The lives and well-being of millions of Ukrainian citizens would not have been adversely affected. In that regard, we have urged Russia time and again to restore respect for the norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, to hold back its aggression against Ukraine and to end the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

In conclusion, in as much as the Russian Minister mentioned George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* in his statement, I would like to mention another one of Orwell's novels, *Nineteen Eighty-four*, in particular the famous quote, "War is peace, freedom is slavery and ignorance is strength." That is the exact philosophy that Russia wants to impose on its own people and on the rest of the world.

Mr. Giacomelli da Silva (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): With respect to the statements made by the representatives of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we reiterate the words of our President, Michel Temer, on 20 September here in this Hall:

> "Governments of different political inclinations coexist in our region. That is natural and sound. What is essential is that there be mutual respect and that we agree on basic common objectives, such as economic growth, human rights, social progress, security and freedom for all citizens." (*A/71/PV.8*).

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): I am forced to exercise the right of reply in response to the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, because, in listening to the falsifications presented by the Minister, I could not figure out whether it is due to the fact that the lies have been repeated so many times that the Azerbaijanis themselves have started to believe those lies.

Memories are so short that the Azerbaijanis have totally forgotten the fact that Nagorno Karabakh never was part of Azerbaijan. It was transferred to Azerbaijan in 1921 by the decision of the Bolshevik party. The Republic of Azerbaijan of 1918-1920 did not include Nagorno Karabakh. Now that there is no longer any Soviet Union any longer, Nagorno Karabakh is independent. Nagorno Karabakh was never, is not, and will never be part of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan cannot and will never have access to the economic potential of the independent State of Nagorno

Karabakh. Paraphrasing the words of the Minister, the sooner Azerbaijan reconciles with that reality and stops killing peaceful civilians, the earlier the Nagorno Karabakh issue will be resolved. Moreover, in order to reconcile oneself to the fact that the war that Azerbaijan unleashed against the people of Nagorno Karabakh was lost a long time ago, one has to get over it. If one starts a war and one loses the war, one cannot continue to blame someone else.

Azerbaijan cannot, it seems, stop portraying everything as being topsy-turvy. The abhorrent barbarism committed against Nagorno Karabakh by the armed forces of Azerbaijan in early April, including intentional, indiscriminate targeting of peaceful civilians, especially children, women and the elderly, and civilian facilities, including schools and kindergartens, killings, barbaric beheadings, torture and the mutilation of bodies is incompatible with the elementary norms of a civilized world. When beheadings and other barbaric acts are broadcast on civilian media sources and the President of the country encourages the soldiers who have committed those barbaric acts, such actions must not be tolerated.

The situation is a direct result of a longstanding policy of racism, intolerance and the incitement of hatred against Armenians, condoned and directly executed by the authorities of Azerbaijan. The grave and systematic violations of international humanitarian law committed by Azerbaijan and the glorification at the highest political level of persons directly involved in the atrocities and mutilations constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes.

If Azerbaijan wishes to contest what I am saying, it should agree to the proposal of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-Chairs regarding the mechanism for investigating ceasefire violations. The Republic of Armenia and the Nagorno Karabakh Republic have provided their agreement. Azerbaijan has refused. Please tell me who has something to hide.

Azerbaijan keeps on discussing Azerbaijani refugees. What about the Armenian, Russian, Jewish, Greek, Assyrian, Kurdish and Yazidi people who became refugees as a result of the Azerbaijani aggression? Only those who were massacred in Sumgait, Baku, Ganja and other towns and villages in Azerbaijan did not become refugees. But massacres are not a solution. Believe me. The people were slaughtered by their own neighbours.

The sooner Azerbaijan reconciles itself to the fact that Nagorno Karabakh is independent and will never be part of Azerbaijan, the better. The right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination has been expressed earlier. Refugees want to return to their original hometowns and residences, including the Armenian refugees who would like to return to Charentsavan, Artashat and other Armenian regions that have been annexed by Azerbaijan as a result of its aggression.

Mr. Mammadov (Azerbaijan): We are taking the floor to counter the baseless allegations made by the Armenian representative. As all who are present know, the Republic of Armenia unleashed war and used and continues to use force against the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, occupying almost one fifth of our territory, including the Nagorno Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts.

Armenia also carried out large-scale ethnic cleaning in the seized areas by expelling about 1 million Azerbaijanis. The successive Governments of Armenia have established a notorious pattern of completely disregarding the generally accepted norms and principles of international law. Committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, sponsoring terrorism, adhering to dubious ethno-religious ideologies and raising territorial claims against all of its neighbours have become part of the normal conduct of that Member State. In fact, it has been well established that Armenia has grossly violated international law. The armed forces of Armenia overran the town of Khojaly in February 1992, which is situated in the Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, and subjected the civilian population and its defenders to an unprecedented massacre.

The barbarism carried out by Armenia in Khojaly and elsewhere probably created a prototype for the notorious behaviour of the Islamic State in Syria and the Levant. With its continued use of force against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Armenia has flagrantly violated the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, by expelling Azerbaijan's civilian population and preventing their return to their homes, Armenian is grossly violating basic human rights and international humanitarian law.

We would like to refresh the memory of the Armenian delegation with regard to Security Council resolution 874 (1993), in which the Council reaffirmed that the Nagorno Karabakh region is part of Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, the Security Council demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all of the occupied territory of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, I would like to note that the Armenian side frequently speculates about the Bolshevik decision of the early 1920s. In fact, in the early 1920s, the Bolshevik Communist party gave historic Azerbaijani lands to Armenia, specifically the Zangezur region.

Regarding the Nagorno Karabakh region, the Bolshevik party made a decision to retain it as a part of Azerbaijan. In fact, it was the Bolshevik party, specifically the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Joseph Stalin, who signed a decree in 1948 for the deportation of 100 Azerbaijanis from what is now called Armenia. Furthermore, Armenia has been taking an unconstructive position in the peace process. Instead of engaging in negotiations in good faith with Azerbaijan, it has tried to consolidate the status quo and mislead the international community. That is a significant part of Armenia's efforts in that connection.

I would like to remind members that Armenia venerates war criminals and convicted terrorists, such as Monte Melkonian and Varoujan Garabedian, who are convicted terrorists but are now venerated as war heroes in Armenia. The Armenians have even erected monuments to them. Moreover, the Government of Armenia openly threatens to conduct further armed attacks against Azerbaijan's populated areas and critical civilian infrastructure, such as water dams and other places, which could lead to mass killings. The Armenian President and other officials have taken pride in participating in the killing of Azerbaijani civilians, including in Khojaly town. Statements to that effect on the part of high-level Armenian officials have become frequent in recent times.

I believe that Armenia should stop its futile efforts to misuse the novel principle of self-determination to cover up their use of force against Azerbaijan and the notorious ethnic cleansing that they had committed against 1 million Azerbaijanis. Armenia is the last entity in the world with the right to speak about the principle of self-determination. It is a country that has ensured that its territory is completely monoethnic, as result of its deporting and forcing out all other ethnicities, including large numbers of Azerbaijanis, which constituted up to 50 per cent of the population of the territory, including in its capital, Yerevan.

As for allegations regarding the recent political processes, including the negotiations and the strengthening of the ceasefire regime, Azerbaijan stands for an effective ceasefire. Our main concern is that frequent violence diverts attention from the resolution of the remaining issues to technical issues. It should also be stressed that all such measures can be helpful only in the context of results-oriented, substantive talks that conform with the agreements reached at the Vienna and Saint Petersburg meetings.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): I apologize for taking the floor once again. When somebody says that something is an established truth, I most certainly want to hear by whom and where it was established and where the proof lies. Otherwise, nothing is established until it is proven and established, or capable of being proven.

In speaking of Khojaly, it is strange to hear the Azerbaijani delegation speaking about Khojaly. I mentioned their short memory. If one reads the Azerbaijani newspapers of that time, it is perfectly clear who committed the Khojaly genocide — it was the leadership of Azerbaijan. That information was posted in newspapers all over the country. I definitely agree about the behaviour pattern of the Islamic State in the Levant and Syria. That pattern could well have been created in Khojaly, but that pattern was created by the Azerbaijani troops, who were killing their own civilian population. Armenian troops were, on the contrary, opening free peace corridors to facilitate the civilian population's withdrawal from the scene of the fighting.

Returning to the issue of self-determination, the current negotiations are, as was mentioned, being conducted under the leadership of the Minsk Group co-Chairs, in accordance with three basic principles, namely, the self-determination of nations, territorial integrity and the non-use of force or threat of the use of force. How can one not talk about self-determination? Self-determination is part of the history of the 193 States Members of the current United Nations. If any nation has had the right to self-determination, then Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh have that same right. No Azerbaijani official can deny them those universal human rights.

It is also interesting to hear about the 1918-1920 situation. What should be remembered, however, is that the League of Nations accepted the request of Armenia and Georgia for admission to the League of Nations. The League refused Azerbaijan's request for admission

to the League because of its territorial problems and unresolved issues with its neighbours.

Speaking about glorifying the remembrance of terrorists, Azerbaijan is the first country to harbour criminals and terrorists, while granting them the status of a hero. Everybody remembers the story of the Azerbaijani officer who murdered a sleeping Armenian officer with an axe during NATO exercises in Budapest, Hungary. The Hungarian court sentenced the axe murderer to life in prison; but he was later extradited to Azerbaijan to continue his sentence. The moment his plane landed in Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijani President pardoned him, granting him every possible glorification as a hero. He became a national Azerbaijani hero. I cannot believe that a nation has chosen someone like Ramil Safarov as a hero merely because he killed an Armenian. What is the future of such a nation?

Armenia is home to 12 national and religious minorities. Some of them, including Yazidis and Assyrians, lack their own State. They are very happily living in Armenia, where they are guaranteed all of their rights. Azerbaijani people were also living in Armenia with guaranteed rights. However, after the outbreak of the massacres in Azerbaijan, where every single Armenian was massacred, today, out of a population of about half a million Armenians formerly in Azerbaijan, not a single Armenian remains in Azerbaijan; the Azerbaijani authorities had, however, presented some falsified numbers on that topic.

Who is more tolerant and who is not? I will leave that rhetorical question to Member States.

Mr. Mammadov (Azerbaijan): I would like to make just a few remarks.

We would like to refresh the memory of the Armenian delegation that, in the current negotiations, the principles now under discussion are based on the Helsinki Final Act. The Helsinki Final Act stresses three principles. But somehow the Armenian delegation tries to provide short versions of them. The first is the political independence of States. Given the years of war against the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the Armenian side has violated that principle. That is the first issue.

The second principle is the respect for the territorial integrity of States. We are wondering how the Armenian side sees that, namely, their obligation under international law to respect the territorial integrity of States.

The third principle is the equal rights and self-determination of peoples, in conformity with the territorial integrity of States, as written in the Helsinki Final Act. Azerbaijan highly appreciates the principle of self-determination. The issue is that Armenia has no right at all to speculate on that principle. For example, first, they have covered up the use of force against Azerbaijan and the ethnic cleansing; secondly, they seek to divert attention from the notorious monoethnic situation that Armenia has artificially created in its own territory. As for the case of Khojaly, indeed, it is one of the darkest pages in the history of mankind.

With regard to responsibility, let me remind everyone that President Serzh Sargsyan, the current President of Armenia, who was head of the illegal armed formations that were created by Armenia in the occupied Azerbaijan territories and which occupied the town of Khojaly in 1992, admitted in public, on record, without any feeling of remorse, unequivocally, his culpability for the extermination of the inhabitants and defenders of the town. The following citation from a well-known interview with the Armenian President is self-explanatory:

> "Before Khojaly, the people of Azerbaijan thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hands against the civilian population. We were able to break that stereotype."

That comes from an interview with Thomas De Waal from his book *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*, published by New York University Press in 2003. I think the quote clearly shows the responsibility of the Armenian Government.

With regard to Azerbaijan, the Government has not given any awards to anyone who was convicted on charges of terrorism. It was the Government of Armenia that pardoned Monte Melkonian, who was a convicted terrorist. The Prime Minister of Armenia welcomed another convicted terrorist, Varoujan Garabedian, at the airport. No official of Azerbaijan has ever done anything similar.

The meeting rose at 9.30 p.m.